

West Plains is a small rural school district located in the South Central part of Missouri. There are 2 elementary schools, 1 middle school and 1 high school and a Career Center (similar to a regional technical center). West Plains has a student population of 2,491 students. There are 188 certified staff members. West Plains was identified by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for improvement in the area of Transition.

In reviewing the school district data it was decided to work on the drop out rate for students with disabilities. The initial data showed students with disabilities dropped out with a higher rate than those without disabilities. In looking for possible causes the district identified high absenteeism, and the lack of students taking advantage of vocational classes, vocational rehabilitation, job shadowing and the A+ program all offered by the district.

Activities implemented included developing a transition curriculum for the high school, offering 0 and 8th hours for students to make up work missed due to absenteeism, exploring outside agencies available to provide programs for students and the development of S.W.A.T. (Students Working at Transition). The SWAT program is a community-based instructional program for high school students enrolled in special services, 16 years and older, who may be transitioning to a vocational situation. Students are

afforded opportunities to learn traditional jobs in non-traditional educational settings such as hospitals and universities.

In the first year of the program a curriculum was developed, 0 and 8th hours were established. Attendance and dropout rates were evaluated at the end of the first year. The absenteeism did decline but the drop-out rate did increase the first year. In looking at the data and evaluation of the activities it was thought that more time was needed to evaluate whether the curriculum would be effective in lowering the drop out rate. Also the development of SWAT for the 06-07 school year would also be an asset to evaluate this coming year. So far, this school year students are showing more interest in school and seem to be improving their self-esteem with the development of job placements.

Additional data in the future will include the numbers of participants in the SWAT program and their placement following graduation.